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ABSTRACT

This profile in outline form of the English language teaching situation in France discusses the role of English within French society and within the educational system. It is noted that English is little used as a medium of communication, although it is the most widely studied language in the educational system. The use of English as medium of instruction on the primary, secondary and university levels and the role of literature, examinations, the syllabus and inspection system are discussed. The composition of the teaching cadre is also dealt with as well as the teacher training system, professional organizations, teaching materials, English outside the educational system and British and American support. A general statement on the status of English vis-a-vis French and a bibliography complete the profile. (AMH)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

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Country: FRANCE

March 1978

This should be read in conjunction with the B.C. Education Profile on France, July 1976.

1. Role of English

The role of English in France is roughly the same as the role of French in England, with the distinction that, as the international language of science and technology, at least a reading knowledge of English is necessary to those doing research. It is not used as a language of instruction (except in the case of the four American and English schools), and is little used as a medium of communication, even with tourists, the French inferiority complex about the use of foreign languages being apparently almost as great as that of the English. It is typical, and paradoxical, that students and even teachers of English who come to our offices and library in France usually address the staff in French, even if they have come to enquire about the possibilities of keeping up their English. It remains however a fact that the bulk of our educational enquiries concern the possibility of learning English. It is also true that increasingly it is required as a job-qualification particularly in industry and commerce.

2. English Within the Educational System

English is by far the most studied language in the educational system (over 80% of students in secondary schools study it as their first foreign language.)

2.1 Hours of Instruction

2.1.1 At the Nursery/Primary level children normally get 4-5 periods per week of 30 minutes each. Foreign language teaching is not however very widespread at this level. (59 Nursery schools in 169 classes, 209 Primary schools in 906 classes.) Only some 6000 children at the Nursery and 30,000 at the Primary level take English classes. It is Ministerial policy that no further English sections should be opened at this level (Decree of 1973). This decision is supported by the findings of Inspecteur Girard who conducted a survey into this area in 1975. The main reasons are lack of trained staff and materials, and discontinuing between Primary and Secondary Schools.

2.1.2 In the secondary system the hours allotted weekly to foreign languages are:

2

	(Classe de 6 ^e)	3 hours + 1 hour of 'soutien'
	(" " 5 ^e)	(work in smaller groups)
	(" " 4 ^e)	3 hours + 2 in first language
1 ^{er} cycle	(" " 3 ^e)	'renforcée'
	(" " 3 ^e)	3 hours + 3 in a second language
	(" " 3 ^e)	if chosen
	(" " 2 ^e)	3 hours
2 ^e cycle	(" " 1 ^{er})	3 hours
	(Terminale - in some sections, eg Technique, 2 in others 3.	

(The 'réforme' may give opportunities for so-called 'options lourdes' with up to 5 hours eventually.)

2.1.3 At the tertiary level the number of hours varies widely between Universities, IUTs and Grandes Ecoles, and within each category. The minimum requirement for all is one hour per week.

2.2 Language/Literature

Literature is not taught as such in the secondary system. Literary texts may however be chosen in preparation for one of the examinations (BEPC, Bac).

In the Universities most of the UERs offer a majority of literature.

In the Grandes Ecoles and IUTs literature is not normally studied.

2.3 Examinations

2.3.1 Secondary: - BEPC - taken at the end of the 1st cycle. This is a centralised examination. It is exclusively oral, based on a text which the student has studied in class.

- Baccalauréat - the school-leaving exam and passport to higher education. This is also centralised. For section A (littéraire) there is a written exam (a long text to read followed by questions). For sections B, C (Maths) and D (Science) there is an oral 'interrogation' on a text chosen by the examiners from about 30 prepared by the student.

Both BEPC and Bac are supervised by the 'Inspection Générale'.

2.3.2 Tertiary: University: the form and content of these exams is determined by the universities themselves. The examinations are the DEUG (after 2 years), the Licence (after 3), Maîtrise (after 4).

IUTs set the exam for the DUT after 2 years.

Grandes Ecoles - all have their own final examinations, for most of which an English component is required, though it may not always be decisive.

2.4 A first language is a formal requirement for the Baccalauréat. It is thus a passport to higher education.

Most of the 'concours' (competitive entry exams) for the Grandes Ecoles include a compulsory English exam.

2.5 Syllabus/Textbooks

2.5.1 For the secondary system the syllabus, contained in the so-called 'Instructions' is laid down nationally by the Inspection Générale.

The responsibility for choice of textbook rests with the majority of the teachers in each school. Decisions are taken in May of each year. Even if an inspector disapproves of a book he has no power to have it changed.

Formerly there was a national 'Commission d'Agrément' for textbooks which published a list of books approved for use. This has now been abolished and replaced by a 'groupe d'étude' which produces critical sheets on books submitted to it. These dossiers are distributed by the CNDP (Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique) to the documentation centre in each school.

2.5.2 In higher education each institution makes its own decisions on syllabus and textbooks.

2.6 Inspection

The system of inspection in the secondary system is powerful and complex.

There are 8 Inspecteurs Généraux (IGs) for English, headed by a Doyen. They are based in Paris. Each of them inspects 'professeurs agrégés et certifiés' in the three académies he oversees.

There are 46 Inspecteurs Pédagogiques Régionaux (IPRs). They are based in the regions. They too, under the supervision of an IG, inspect professeurs agrégés et certifiés. They also inspect the 'Maîtres Auxiliaires' (MA's) and teachers in the private secondary schools. (The number of IPRs has risen from about 15 in 1974 to 46 in 1977.)

Inspection of the PEGC (who usually teach both English and French) is carried out by the Inspectors of Primary Schools. They are non-specialists.

The power of the Inspection is considerable. Inspections of the 15000 odd teachers of English in secondary schools take place at irregular intervals, usually every 3 or 4 years. The Inspector is not obliged to notify the teacher of his visit but often chooses to do so. After observing a class or classes given by the teacher, the Inspector sends a 'proposed' notation to the Ministry of Paris. This is made up of a 'note pédagogique' which accounts for 60% and a 'note administrative' - 40%. Complicated statistical operations are performed upon this proposal and eventually the teacher is informed of his revised notation. This is on a scale from 1-20. On it depends his possibility of transferring from one post to another and his salary level. (There are 11 échelons.)

Small wonder that teachers go in awe of Inspectors and are quick to note what the inspector disapproves of.

2.7

2.7.1 In the secondary system there is no ESP to speak of. The only classes where some attention is paid to it is in the Terminale of the Lycée Technique and in certain 'Classes Préparatoires' (coaching students for the 'concours' of the 'Grandes Ecoles'.)

2.7.2 In higher education there is in theory a need for ESP. This is particularly felt in the Grandes Ecoles des Ingénieurs and in the IUTs. The situation is however peculiarly French. Students do their specialist study in French, and the English they learn is not necessarily connected with it. It is usually only later, when they enter a profession, that they discover a real need for ESP.

3. Teaching Cadre

In general the supply of teachers outruns the demand.

At the secondary level, given that qualified teachers are state functionaries and cannot be dismissed, the state ensures that the number who are given a qualification each year does not exceed what the system will bear. In 1977 there was an overall reduction of 25% in the number of parts available. In that year only 3000 candidates for the CAPES were accepted out of an entry of 38000! The pass rate for the agrégation in English was 8%.

The same situation prevails in the Universities, where the competition for a 'poste titulaire' (undismissable) is fierce, and the minimum qualification a 'doctorat de 3ème cycle'.

3.1 In secondary schools most of the staff is French. A few expatriate wives - and husbands - do manage successfully to re-qualify in the French system however.

In Universities the qualified staff is overwhelmingly French. There are however large numbers of expatriate assistant teachers, often in an extremely precarious position. The same applies to IUTs and Grandes Ecoles.

3.2 80% of French secondary school teachers are qualified (CAPES or Agrégation).

In Universities all 'titulaires' are, by definition, qualified, at least in their own terms.

3.3 Teacher Training

For secondary schools:

CAPES: Normally this involves obtaining a 'licence' (4 years university). A written competitive exam is then taken. If passed, the candidate spends a year in a CPR (Centre Pédagogique Régional) where he attends a lecture a week and does 3 bouts of 8 weeks observation/teaching. He qualifies in a final oral exam conducted in Paris.

Agrégation: After obtaining the Agrégation the aspiring teacher is allotted one class of his own and another in which he is supervised by a 'Conseiller Pédagogique'.

PEGC: This is a course taken in a 'Centre de Formation des PEGC'.

It lasts two years following the 'licence'. (PEGC can only teach the first 2 years of secondary school).

None of these systems is a real-teacher training in the British sense. Particularly the Agrégation and CAPES are highly traditional exams based largely on translation and quick-wittedness. Everyone criticises them but no one could bear to give them up.

In-service training of secondary school teachers hardly exists. The useful system of annual 'stages académiques' in each region has been axed by the Minister. The meetings now run in CRDPs can only take place on Wednesday afternoons since this is the teachers' day off and they are never freed from classes at any other time.

For Universities, etc. ...

No training. In-service work has to be entirely voluntary and is organised by bodies such as the British Council.

3.4 Professional organisations

3.4.1 A.P.L.V. (Association des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes). Open to all teachers of foreign languages at all levels. It publishes a journal, Les Langues Modernes. It concerns itself with both professional and career questions. It organises occasional 'colloques' on a national level. People tend to look upon it as a rather staid body.

3.4.2 UPLEGESS (Union des Professeurs de Langues Etrangères dans les Grands Etablissements Supérieurs Scientifiques. Set up in 1974 to cater for the needs of teachers of all languages in higher education, especially the Grandes Ecoles. It has a special interest in ESP and organises at least one major colloque/workshop per year. It publishes a journal, Recherches et Echanges. It strives for a youthful image.

3.4.3 GLERAS (Group de Liaison et de Recherches pour l'Anglais de Spécialité). Set up in 1977 to cater for teachers of ESP in the University sector. It is in fact a sub-organisation of the S.A.E.S. It holds at least one major colloque per year. So far it has no journal.

3.4.4 S.A.E.S. (Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur). This is the University English teachers' organisation. It is mainly concerned with literary studies and university politics. Its journal is Etudes Anglaises. It has an annual congress.

3.4.5 There is so far no IUT language teachers' association, though an attempt was made to set one up in 1978 and this will probably bear fruit in 1979. Interestingly, there is a journal however, the Bulletin Pédagogique des IUT.

4. Teaching Materials

There is no shortage of teaching materials at any level (except perhaps the primary) at least insofar as quantity and variety are concerned.

Until recently children were expected to buy their own books. The reform, which so far only applied to 'classe de 6ème', will allot each school a per capita sum for purchase of books to be lent by the school. This has already begun to have a sobering effect on the production of over-luxurious books.

There is a great variety of books in use - over 20 different courses in the 1er cycle and at least 6 significant ones in the 2ème cycle.

In the 1er cycle the most widely-used are:

34%	Speak English	Benhamou, Dominique, Budzinski (Nathan)
22%	Imagine You're English	N Goody, D Gibbs (Belin)
12%	It's Up To You	G Capelle, D Girard (Hachette)
8%	L'Anglais par l'Illustration et le Dialogue (old ed)	P M Richard and W Hall (Hachette)
12%	Id (new ed)	
3%	Let's Go	G Broughton, H Gantier (Longman/Colin)

In the 2ème cycle:

The English Speaking World (1 and 2)	A Grémy et al (Nathan)
People	M Swam and F Houdard (Hatier)
Today	G Hardin, R Ruard (Hachette)
Let's Go On 2nde } 1ère }	A Poujade et al (Longman/Colin)
Imagine You're English	N Goody, D Gibbs (Belin)
Making Sense	F Grellet, V Kay, A Malet, G Quénelle, J Samuel (Hachette)

There is a sporadic use of UK published materials eg Kernel Lessons, Strategies, Mainline, English in Situations.

It is common for tape to be used, and all schools have at least one tape recorder, many a language lab. The use of slides/filmstrips is common but generally confined to A/V courses. The use of film is rare.

In the Formation Continue British materials are more widely used eg Access to English, Kernel Lessons etc. Also very much used is All's Well - Dickinson, Levecque, Sagot (Didier).

5. English outside the educational system

The teaching of foreign languages to adults was given a boost by the law of 16 July 1971 on the 'Formation Permanente'. This requires all firms above a certain size to contribute 1% of their annual wage bill for the continuing education of employees. Teaching languages was one of the obvious ways of using up this money and many schools and groupings of teachers grew up to take advantage of the boom. There are signs however that the gold rush is now over. Employers are diversifying their use of the money, trades unions are clamouring for a bigger share of it for other projects, and the government is on the watch for abuses.

There is notwithstanding an enormous, complex and virtually unchartable system of private and semi-private teaching. It is simply not possible to give here an adequate description of the organisations undertaking this kind of work. Broadly they fall into these divisions:

- Private language schools. eg ILC, Lanco etc.
- Independent groups of teachers on a cost/profit sharing basis eg ACI, ACREA.
- Big company schools eg IBM, Kodak, Rhône-Poulenc, Air France etc.
- Educational institutions with a 'formation' department eg ESIEE, IUT de Paris etc.
- Companies which cover all aspects of Formation Continue eg CIFOP Mulhouse.

The kind of English taught varies from recreational/general purpose to very specific eg preparing doctors to take part in an international medical congress.

6. British Support for the Teaching of English

6.1 The British Council staff in Paris comprises one English Language Officer, one Assistant ELO and an English Teaching Assistant.

There are no British teachers contracted through the British Council.

There are some 1300 British 'assistants' in secondary schools each year. These are recruited via CBEVE.

There are also a few (70/80) British exchange teachers in France each year. CBEVE is also responsible for them.

It is not possible to give accurate figures for other British nationals in France on the staff of Universities, Grandes Ecoles, private language schools etc. There are probably several thousands.

6.2 British Council staff in France are concerned mainly with:

- diffusion of information on ELT,
- loan of materials,
- teacher training courses,
- materials production.

(For detailed information on these activities please refer to the appendices to the Annual Report for France.)

6.3 British teaching materials are widely used in the private sector, 'Formation Continue' and in higher education. Their use in the secondary system is limited to the extent to which they do or do not conform to the 'Instructions'.

6.4 There is no direct teaching in the British Council in Paris, but the British Institute, with which it shares its premises, is almost wholly a direct teaching institute.

7. American support for the Teaching of English

The Fulbright Foundation pays for about 12 teachers to visit the USA for 3 months each year.

Forum magazine is distributed free of charge.

8. UN/UNESCO contribution

Tapes on topical subjects discussed in the assemblies in English are made available free of charge to those who want to have them. Our own Centre benefits from these gifts.

9. General Statement

Whereas it is undoubtedly true that English enjoys by far the most privileged position among foreign languages in France, there are counter-currents which should not be forgotten.

France still considers its own language and culture as of major world significances - and rightly so. This means however that pronouncements made here about the importance of English as a vehicle of international communication often lack conviction. There is an unspoken and perhaps unconscious belief that it does not matter that much.

This is especially the case when dealing with 'official' France, that is, Ministries and public departments. Difficulties at this level are reinforced by the centralised, bureaucratic system which prevails, and which is reflected in certain unyielding modes of thinking, quite alien to the Anglo-Saxon temperament.

The most hopeful developments are in the field of adult language training (Formation Continue) where the stranglehold of the 'system' does not apply and where payment is very much by results. In this sector there is a ferment of productive activity.

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(There are also many publications distributed locally from CRDPs.

If this Profile is more than a year old further up-to-date information
may be found in ETIC Archives.